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OPPORTUNITIES AND CRISES AS BARRIERS TO EDUCATION: THE CASE OF SAN CHILDREN AT ACOMBINED SCHOOL IN THE KAVANGO REGION OF NAMIBIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a study that followed and documented the learning experiences of San children who have been mainstreamed into the formal education system. The mainstreaming of San Children in the formal education system is part of the San Development Programme headed by the Namibian Deputy Prime Minister's Office. The paper presents the analysis of the 2013-2014 interviews conducted among San boys and girls attending a certainCombined School in the Kavango Region, their teachers as well as hostel employees and care takers. The data indicates that San children enrolled at thisschool face challenges in communication, difficulties in comprehending learning instructions and fitting in, which includes food choices and language of socialisation with other children. The study also found that San children felt that they were not treated well by teachers and care takers, but that, to some extent, they got along very well with fellow learners. Recommendations are made to develop a more inclusive, responsive and sustainable strategiesfor mainstreaming,to ensure successful learning for San childrenat primary education level. It is recommended that such strategies should include policy development whichconsiders linguistic, cultural and the indigenous ways of learning of San communities and other minority groups.

Key Words: opportunities, crises, barriers, marginalised children, minority groups, rights to education, inclusive education, zones of exclusion.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

According to Hopson, Camp-Yeaky and Bokari (2008, p. xxiv) “the face of education and schooling in globalised societies is constantly contested by the winds of social and historical change, unique to each country context and situation”. With the sustainable development goals now taking over the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),through Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), countries are urged to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”(United Nations, 2015, p. 12). Creating opportunities for children to learn is one of the most desired signs of transformation and growth in education for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015).It is the policy of Namibia to ensure that all children have equal access to quality education. Nevertheless, constructing schools to only cater for San or any other minority group children is discouraged, in favour of the policy of mainstreaming, ensuring thatall children receive education of the same quality.

In 2010, the Namibian government, through the San Development Programme,under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, provided an opportunity for San children living on the commercial farms of the Otjozondjupa Region, to enrol at the nearest school, located in the Kavango Region.The aim of the San Development Programme is to ensure a deliberate, targeted effort to create developmental opportunities for Namibian indigenous minority groups. Such efforts included enabling children of indigenous minorities to access education. One strategy employed was therefore to ensure that all children from commercial farms are enrolled in the formal education system. As a result,120 San learners were enrolled at the school in July 2011 and additional 80 learners joined the school at the beginning of 2012.

This case study is about the performance and academic progress of these 200 San children. The study was designed to investigate whether the learners and their parents made use of the opportunities provided by the Namibian government and determine whether structures that would enable these learners succeed were in place. The paper is therefore an analysis of interviews conducted among San learners (boys and girls), their teachers as well as hostel employees and care takers at thisCombined School (CS) in the Kavango Region.Through this case study the researchers explored the following three research questions:

- *How did San children and their parents made use of the opportunities provided to them by the Namibian government?*
- *What structures did the school put in place to ensure successful learning of San children?*
- *What were the indicators for successful school attendance and progress in learning*?

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Since 1948 UNESCO has enabled member states to recognise that education is a public good and access to education as "a fundamental human rights" of which the state is the duty bearer (UNESCO, 2015, p. iii). It is further recognised that unless children are provided with education at an early age there is no guarantee that they will participate effectively in development and social transformation in their societies.This recognition has resulted in many international conventions and declarationsbeen promulgated and ratified, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and The Human Rights Declaration. Furthermore, the right to education is affirmed in numerous human rights treaties and back in 2007 UNICEF and UNESCO partnered in promoting the 'Human Rights Based Approach to Education for All', whoseaim was "to assure that every child is provided with a quality education that respects and promotes her or his right to dignity and optimum development" (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007, p. 1). Additionally, goal 2of the EFA, stipulated the need for 'ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality'. By now all societies areaware that only through quality education countries can improve educational outcomes for all children. However, through implementing the EFA countries realised that focusing solely on access to education can neglect paying attention to the quality of education (UNESCO, 2015).These goals together with the MDGs have been replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals, with Goal 4 advocating for inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all(United Nations, 2015).

With the aim to mobilise all countries and partners around the world torally behind Goal 4and transform people's lives through equitable quality education, UNESCO, together with the EFA

partners, launched the “Education 2030: The framework for action”, known also as the Incheon Declaration, which is “a humanistic vision… based on a human rights and dignity, social justice, inclusion, protection, cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity” (UNESCO, 2015, p. iii). It proposed ways of implementing, coordinating, financing and monitoring Goal 4 of the SDGs. According to UNESCO and partners, inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all require countries to have a common understanding and develop multi-stakeholder partnerships and financing models, to ensure that strategies to achieve Goal 4 are comprehensively integrated into existing or new education sector plans of each country (UNESCO 2015).

In regards to access and equity in education, Lewin (2015) discussed at length the zones of exclusion in education and concluded that higher enrolment does not equate to universal access to meaningful and equitable education and learning. He established that, despite international efforts,“Africa is dramatically under educated at secondary school compared with all other regions” of the world, “with gross enrolment rates below 50% in lower secondary” (Lewin, 2015, p.24). What led to this under education at secondary school level is the weak foundation some children received at the primary school level (Hays, 2016) and that this under education is more pronounced among the marginalised groups of the world (Hopson, Camp-Yeaky, &Bokari, 2008). Extensive research and conceptualisation of responsive pedagogy has been undertaken and approaches and strategies of improving education for children (and adults) from the marginalised and minority groups, especially for San children,are well documented (Biesele, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Le Roux, 2002; Lewin, 2015; Hays, 2016).

Namibia being a signatory to many of the declarations has attempted many strategies to address access and equity in education. However, it has been noted over the years, that issues of social equity, social justice and democracy, is still apparent in the world of the San child. While Namibia continues to make progress in improving access to good quality education for many children, San children continue to be at the margins of this quality education (Hays, 2016). According to Dr Libertine Amadhila, former Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia,for that reason, the Namibian government has introduced a “targeted and deliberate discriminatory programme”, the ‘San Development Programme’,to ensure that as many San children as possible are enrolled

in school. This is the framework in which the enrolment of San children at this particular school was implemented, to provide quality primary education to San children living on commercial farms, promote their rights and dignity and enable them to complete secondary education.Like other educators, the authors believe that high quality education must be underpinned by equity principles, including access to good schools, challenging and engaging curricula, appropriate and responsive pedagogical approaches as well as meaningful learning and culturally appropriatelearning resources. This study is thus framed around access to quality education and equity principles.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The researchers examined the attendance, performance and progress of San children over a three-year period (January 2013–April 2015). Thelongitudinal study sought to understand the circumstances that San children found themselves, where learning opportunities were accorded to them, the measures that were put in place to accommodate their learning needs and how they utilised these opportunities. Learning societies are constantly changing, as affected by technological innovations, financial and economic crises, environmental upheavals and globalisation. Longitudinal studies become best tools to understand how learning is affected by such changes (Tooth, Ware, Purdie and Dobson, 2005).Through a case analysis research design and using qualitative approaches, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with San learners, their teachers, hostel matrons and care takers. A total of 20 learners, five teachers and hostel care takers were purposefully selected and interviewed.

Since the discovery of case study as a research methodology in the 1900s within the discipline of anthropology, many researchers have developed the approach into a rich, explicit and inclusive research methodology (Johansson, n.d.). According to Paton (1990), case study is the research technique of choice for examiningunusual and special cases,that may be particularly troublesome or enlightening, such as outstanding successes or notable failures. Information-rich cases and extreme or deviant cases were further purposively selected for follow-up purposes (Patton, 1990). The researchers chose to analyse the data longitudinally because it enabled investigations of participant outcomes and possible treatments and exposures to be collected during multiple follow-up times (Davies, 1994; Ruspini, 1999).

3. PRESEANTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Two researchers collected data through field notes and thereafter compared notes in order to determine what information was relevant to the research questions. The researchers concentrated on issues and elements thought important for successful learning. Data collected is thus presented and analysed under the following subheadings: biographical information, school attendance, the school environment (including school facilities, classroom environment, hostels, and playground area), teaching and learning approaches (including teaching methods and language of instruction), relationships building and deviant cases.

4.1 Biographical information and enrolment

The learners who participated in this study were taken from commercial farms of the Grootfontein district in the Otjozondjupa Region of Namibia. In Namibia, many San adults are employed on the commercial farms, either herding livestock, labouring on the maize fields or tracking wild animals on the game farms for the enjoyment of tourists.The furthest farm where these children came from was about 20 km away from the school. The children were delivered to the school by about two truckloads in the middle of 2011. When the first 120 San learners were delivered to the school in 2011, theauthors were lucky to be at that school on the day of the delivery, conducting another study on school dropout (Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, Tjiramba & Beukes, 2015). Instantly, the authors developed an interest into investigating what happens to children who were rounded up for their own future, to get an education. The children were accompanied to the school by two male adults, who stayed at the school for less than a week (field notes, school principal, July 2013).As could be ascertained, children were not of the same age, but because this was the first time they have ever attended school, they were all placed in one classroom, a Grade 1 class, with no consideration of their ageor even height (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: San children on their first day ofschool. ©Haaveshe Nekongo-Nielsen

According to the School Principal interviewed on that day, "San learners were placed in the same classroom so that they would not feel isolated from their peers. It was also the first time these learners ever enrolled in "a formal school and classroom". TheGrade 1 teacher had this to say about the situation: "Grade 1 is where we all started, everybody must experience what it feels like to be a Grade 1 learner. This is where the basics are taught and therefore the foundation of all learning" (field notes, July 2011).

4.2 School attendance

Learners were expected to attend classes daily,yet,by 2013 about 50 of the 120 San learners who were admitted to the Grade 1 in 2011 had dropped out and further 29 of the 2012 cohort, leaving only 121attending school by the end of 2013; that means a 40% dropout in the first year. Eight (8) learners were found to be repeating Grade 1and twenty-six (26) learners were repeating Grade 2. According to the teachers interviewed, this repetition has discouraged many San learners and some have left the school instead of repeating a Grade. The reasons for dropping were as diverse as the learners, from their culture being ridiculed in a History class, to subjects being too difficult to understand, to school being far from home, to being laughed at in class (field notes, interview with a "serial" dropout San learner in 2014 and 2015).

The trend of dropping out was also noted in the hostels, where 182 learners were admitted in 2012. The number has since decreased to 151 towards the end of 2012 and in June 2013, only 140 learners were left in the hostel. It was found that San learners between ages 10 and 15 drop out more than those of younger ages. One boy was asked why he had been dropping out from time to time and still finding opportunities to come back. His reply was, "I cannot concentrate well among little ones. They laugh at me if they get correct answers first in the class. I find it difficult to be in Grade 1 at my age". The researchers noted that he expressed himself well in English,because "I had opportunities on the farm to use the language with my parents' employer". He found it difficult to write Englishthough,as he did not have the requisite grammatical knowledge and skills.The teacher was asked, whether it would have been better and motivating to this particular learner if his capacity to communicate in English wastested so that he could be placed in an advanced Grade rather than Grade 1. The teacher's response was, "it was his first time enrolling in a formal education system, so we wanted to first check him out".

4.3 School facilities and environment

The classes at the Combined School were not enlarged to accommodate the 120 learners and the 80 additional San learners transported to the same school at the beginning of 2012. According to the school principal, make shift-tent-classrooms were provided, but there were no extra teachers provided to the school. That means learners contested for all classroom resources that were meant for a few.Sometimes early 2012 an extra teacher was provided to the school and the Grade 1 class was divided into two:Grade 1A with 117 learners and Grade 1B with 83 learners, both classrooms with only one teacher each.

Since, the commercial farms were these children came from were far from the school, it meant learners were accommodated in a tent hostel. The hostel was run by the local community members who cooked local food types.When it came to food preferences in the hostel, the San learners preferred meat, bread and pap to fish and chicken and they liked a cup of tea. The hostel matron noted that San learners did not like the food cooked in the hostel and many times there was food left on their plates. The learners interviewed said that "some food tasted strange" and it was not the same as their parents cooked. Also, "many times there was no meat only maize meal

porridge and chicken or fish"(field notes, June 2014).Some learners also indicated that it was not good to sleep in the hostel, they wanted to "sleep next to family members at home".

4.4 Teaching and learning approaches

As soon as San learners entered the classroom in the middle of 2011, they also entered a new world, a new language in which their learning will be delivered. This language of instruction they have not heard before and it was no near their own language: orthographically, morphologically or even in semantics. Figure 2 below presents the Grade 1 classroom'swriting on the wall,with days of the week and class rules in Rukwangali.

Figure 2: Learning resources on the wall of the Grade 1 class. ©Haaveshe Nekongo-Nielsen

The Language of Instruction at the schooltill today continue to be Rukwangali, which is a Bantu language while the San learners'Mother Tongue is Ju/hoansi which is a Khoikhoi (click) language.The Grade 1 learners were expected to begin their learning in the Rukwangali Language and English from Grade 4 onwards.

4.5 Relationship building and school ethos

Some of the San learners were found to be above the age for the Grade, 10 to 12 year olds still in Grade 1. It was therefore difficult for San children to sometimes fit-in with the Rukwangali speaking young learners who were mostly about 7-8 years of age (field notes, July 2011 and June, 2013). Due to the fact that they had never enrolled in any school they had become over-age for the Grade 1. This starting school late arises from the fact that there were no schools or even kindergartens on the farms where the parents worked.

When asked what they thought of their teachers, San learners described the relationships between them and their teachers as 'so-so'. They did not appreciate methods used by the teachers to teach and "talk to them". Learners interviewed narrated how they were scolded if they missed a class/period or made mistakes on their class workbooks. Where they came from you could "make mistakes, but you did not get punished". However, San learners were happy with fellow learners. The playground was the most enjoyable place of the whole school environment. They explained how they interacted with other learners, learning a new language; and the same was true for the vaKwangwali learners. Two vaKwangali boys who were interviewed had begun to speak the San language as a result of their interactions. When asked why they have decided to learn the San language, one Rukwangali learner answered, "I enjoy the clicks in the language. It is like you are chewing something and I love that sound". It is a good language and people should learn it", the learner concluded(field notes, July 2014).

4.6 Deviant learners

Longitudinal data allowed the analysis of descriptive patterns of change over time, enabling researchers to "locate the causes of social phenomena" for further replication and factors that must be avoided in future implementations of programmes of this sort (Menard, 1991, p. 5). The researchers were happy to find some learners that were pressing on with their education and succeeding despite the challenges and the unfavourable circumstances. These extreme or deviant cases were found to be rich with information worthreplicating in future educational programmes for marginalised children.Many learners have continued because they get food, hostel and transport. This lightens their burdens or that of the parents. The principal of the school opined that "it is important that learners eat regular meals on each day. Hunger has forced quite a

number of learners to leave school in many cases. They buy toiletries and clothing from the money they make on the farms during weekends. There are some arrangements that they work during weekends on the farms to earn such an income for their use". It is equally important that systems that facilitate teaching and learning are put in place as to curtail on several vicissitudes that bar learners from attending school. In the case of the san, this is greatly important as their homes are far away from their places of learning.

The main barrier that the learners have experienced is language as a medium of instruction. In 2012, 52 San learners enrolled while 11 dropped at the end of the year. About 19 of the total number passed while 23 failed their first grade. Only one learner has made it to Grade 5 in 2016 as many have dropped in the preceding grades. Some dropped because of other children bullying them through the unknown language. The other barriers include arranged early marriages and the movement of parents (nomadism) from one place to the other. It is difficult for them to "go back to school when such incidents occur in their lives as they are a form of group that stays together most of their times', continued the principal of the school.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

According to Lewin, access to education does not only mean providing classrooms and teachers but it also means providing opportunities and support systems to help children to succeed. Ladson-Billings (2001) and Le Roux (2002) also found that if provided with the support structures to enable them to learn and enjoy learning, minority children do succeed in educational programmes.Lewin (2015)believes that the rights to education of children who never enrol in school "are completely compromised" (p. 79) if they are not supported in their learning endeavours.

Data collected during this study is discussed within the framework of access and equity principles in education. The findings are no different from other researchers onSan education in Namibia (Biesele, 1992; Hays, 2016). However, this study highlighted issues peculiar to this particular case/school, including the processes of educational delivery methods that have promoted or impeded learning. In general, the participationof San learners at the school was less

than what was envisaged by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. However, the school administrators expected learners to drop out because, "if you enrol 10 San learners expect 5 to drop out" (field notes, June 2014). The findings indicated that the main barriers faced by San learners at the school was the language of instruction and pedagogical approaches; followed by distance between school and home; non-supportive and unfamiliar learning environments; curricular issues; and cultural differences and developing relationships were the least of their challenges.

5.1 Language of instruction and pedagogical approaches

The main shocking element to San children when they first arrived at the school that early morning in July 2011 was the "strange talk in the classroom" (according to San learners interviewed, July 2013). For all learners and teachers interviewed, language was the 'greatest challenge'. Learners faced challenges of communication in English and Rukwangali, the languages of instruction;Rukwangalifor grades 1-3 and English as from Grade 4. This challenge wasmore pronounced among girls (female learners interviewed, July 2014). Not only that the children were learning totally two new languages, but the learning instruction for other subjects wasalso facilitated through the new language mediums. On the commercial farms where San learners came from, the lingua franca was Afrikaans, with some English. Yet the children were expected to learn English, the country's official language and Rukwangali, the local lingua franca(language of the school location)and expected to succeed in school.

Namibia has a language policy for education, stipulatingthat children must be taught in Mother Tongue in Grades1 to 3. The goals of the 2003 Revised Language Policy for Namibian Schools was to "promote the language and cultural identity of learners through the use of Mother Tongue as a medium of instruction in Grades 1-3 …" (Ministry of Basic Education, Sports andCulture (MBESC), 2003, p. 3). Discussions that led to the Language Policy for Namibian Schools made it clear that children will be taught in their Mother Tongue during the first 3 years of their primary education (MBESC, 2003). The reason for this language policy prescription was based on the knowledge that children learn better when they understand what the teacher is saying, and that is usually achieved when they are taught in their mother tongue early on in their lives(UNESCO, 2008).Teachers at this school were aware that 'children in grades 1–3 would

have difficulty expressing abstract concepts or ideas in the second tongue'. However, "we could not do anything because none of us (*teachers*) spoke the San language" (interview with the Grade 2 teacher).

According to UNESCO when learners are taught in a language they do not comprehend, "they *will*not comprehend the instructions and as a result *will* not find the learning meaningful; they therefore decide, there is no need for them to continue with schooling" (UNESCO, 2012, p. 12, *emphasis authors*). In 2008, UNESCO conducted a study across 26 countries which showed that over 50 percent of learners who dropped out of school did not speak the language in which they were being educated. Similarly, Elsworth (2013, p. 1) found that, "ultimately, it is difficult for a child to succeed as a language minority student without having a solid foundation in his first language".Benjamin Lee Whorf (1942) further argued that language shapes the way we think, and determines what we think about. He believed that depending on the language we speak we see the world differently. Therefore, if ones' language is not catered for in curricula issues, it is likely to become a barrier in learning.Therefore, making Rukwangali a language of instruction for children who have never heard the language before and whose Mother Tongue language structure is very far fromRukwangali, made the language of instruction an effective barrier to learning for San learners at this particular school.

Also, the language of instruction has implications on the involvement of parents in assisting their children with homework. It simply means that there needs to be a different person to assist the learners as the parents may not know and understand the medium of instruction. Research has found that "language minority parents cannot always help their children with homework, so homework assignments may not always be completed satisfactorily" (Elsworth, 2013, p.1).This study found that, even though the children have begun to pick up on Rukwangali, their writing of the language was weak and this contributed to the poor school results, a fact that made them to repeat grades or drop out altogether.

In addition to language of instruction challenge, the hostel matron noted that San learners had a problem with being disciplined, they tend to leave school, and San parents supported their children's behaviours in this regard. Experts on San culture and education however are of the

opinion that it is not discipline that San parents detest, it is the manner in which disciplinary actions are usually meted out, all the time making the child feel different and vulnerable. Biesele(1992) indicates that, like all parents in other cultures of the world, San parents didn't like their kids being in a vulnerable position. Teachers were aware that learning is successful facilitated through a language that learners can comprehend, and that language learning and acquisition is the foundation of a learning culture. However, the authors observed that the methodology of teaching children in a new language and assimilating San learners to the new environment were found inadequate at this particular school. The teaching methods used led to many learners dropping out of school.

Hays (2016) also noted that while there was a recognition of low level of educational success among indigenous people in mainstream schools, nothing has been done to rectify the situation. In her book: *Owners of Learning*, Hays (2016) discussed how the approaches to learning used at another school in Namibia where most San children attend school, was a barrier to the learning of children coming from the village schools where flexible approaches were being used. She reiterated that San people have developed flexible pedagogical practices and therefore find it difficult to learn under strained circumstances and didactic teaching environments, where rote learning is emphasised. As the oldest residents of Southern African tribes, they have time tested learning practices which included knowledge transmission from one generation to another. In most cases these learning practices are based on flexible classrooms and taking place under mutually respected conditions/circumstance (Hays, 2016). Moreover, the literature reviewed provided many examples of approaches that have worked in other projects implemented in the country and elsewhere in the world; projects were San communities of Namibia and educators co-developed learning materials and taught children with the assistance of adult members of the community (Biesele, 1992; Hopson and Hays, 2008 & Hays, 2016).

It is unfortunate that best practices available in the country and elsewhere in the world were not used to provide teaching and learning approaches that were most helpful to the learners. For instance, the authors wondered why, with that ample evidence regarding language of instruction and with over a hundred learners from the same language group arriving at the school, a San language Grade 1 class was not established, to avoid 'shocking learners with a strange language'

early in their schooling thereby making their educational experience painful. Since the learners were coming from the farms where Afrikaans was a lingua francawhya Grade 1 Afrikaans class was not established, or the school could have considered a mixture of Rukwangali and Afrikaans as the medium of instruction for the early grades (1 – 4). If the teachers and school authorities took time to find what leaners were good at and what they enjoyed they could have tailor-made the learning topics and teaching methods to the needs of learners in order to ensure both access and success in education (Lewin, 2015).

5.2 The distance between school and home

School attendance of San children was found to fluctuate and seriously dipped down to 100 learners towards the end of 2014 (field notes, April 2015). The school has a practice of giving learners off-weekends, where everything at the school will be closed including hostels, then San learners are forced to go back to their parents at the farms. Due to the long distance between the farms where the parents resideand the inability in most cases to pay for transport, San learners do go for weekends but in many cases that meant the end of their schooling, they do not come back to school. Such learners would immediately be considered 'dropout cases', if stayed away 10 consecutive days. If some parents succeed in sending them back to school, learners might only appear at the school after two weeks or a month later.

Some young learners learned to leave school around Wednesdays and go to their parents, because they get tired of waiting for the older learners on Fridays. In this case, it might take the younger learner a day before s/he reaches home. When asked what the school does to ensure the children had reached home safely, all the school authorities could say was "they are San, they are good in tracking, they know exactly where they came from (teachers and hostel matron, field notes, June 2014). It has also been observed that, since San children always move in groups, it means once one child goes a good number will follow. Hence, at the most, there are only 2-3 days that these children attend classes, which means, they miss a lot of lessons on the days they were absent. The school administration has noted that Fridays and Mondays are usually the most disrupted days at school.

5.3 Non-supportive and unfamiliar learning environments

Under these circumstances, where children are taken to a strange school by truck loads, far away from their families, learners were found not to concentrate on learning and as soon as they arrived at the school they were already planning their way back to the farms. The study found that before taking the San children to the school,there were no support programmes put in place to address their needs. For instance,having a teacher on board who spoke the language of the children, immersing the children in the language of instruction beforehand or considering a different language as a medium of instruction. Furthermore, no extra lessons or counselling services were available at the school. And when younger learners leave school for the off-weekends, no tracking system was in place to ensure they arrivesafely at their parents, and whether parents still wanted their dropout children to continue with schooling.It is also worth noting that even though parents had the responsibilities of ensuring that children returned to school after off-weekends,no financial provision was made in the programme for children's transport to school and back.

5.4 Deviant cases in spite of curricular challenges

Amidst the challenges though, the study found that there were learners who survived the hurdles, remained at school and continued with their education. These learners were good in mathematics and environmental studies. The school matron noted that the San learners enjoyed gardening and liked to work together (team work) when they were engaged in gardening activities. Most of them also enjoyed arts and drawing and they sometimes wanted to dramatise their drawings. When approached during such drawings by one of the researcher, they showed their work and responded or explained in their mother tongue as they found English difficult to express themselves correctly. Moreover, boys were found to be good at sport and girls enjoyed cultural dancing and music genres.Experts on San education are of the opinions that subjects of mathematics, the arts, environment studies and agriculture are very appropriate for a primary level education since at this age, children learn by doing (Biesele, 1992; Hays, 2016). These subjects werealso familiar and useful to this particular group of San learners, considering their cultural backgrounds and the environment they live in, the commercial farms.

5.5 Cultural differences and developing relationships

Research has showed that one's language is a vehicle to cultural development. Language provides people with many of the categories human beings use for expressing their thoughts, and thus language influences cultural behaviours and norms (Benjamin, 1942; Elsworth, 2013). Benjamin (1942) noted that, the values and customs in the culture that one grows up shape the way in which that person think. The study found that since the children were uprooted from their families and brought to a school where the culture was different it took them long to adjust to the new culture and their new friends (fellow learners). However, it is gratifying to note that even though language was found to be a barrier to learning in the classroom, for social interactions, free from the confines of classroom practice, language and culture was an asset. As a matter of fact, the children, both the vaKwangali and San, found this interactions exciting and an opportunity to learn each other's languages. Theauthors observed that San children had easily developed social relationships with children from the other ethnic group. At the playground and in hostels, a few have begun to find friends among the vaKwangali children and play together using Rukwangali or some English during play (break) time. According to the hostel matron, San children liked to work in groups and do chores such as cleaning dishes as a group activity.Such observations could have been used more systematically by the school to avoid culture shock and alienating San learners.

The study also found that due to the long distance between the farms and the school, San learners were unable to go for weekends and "and among those who managed to go, only a few came back". Those who were not able to go home during their 'off-weekends', they made a habit of being near the adults on the school premises and even in the nearby villages. According to teachers, "San learners like meeting any of the parents that show up at the school, even Rukwangali parents". When one of the San parents comes to the school, all other San learners will leave their learning activities or whatever they were doing to go and talk to the parent, asking questions such as 'how is everything at home', 'is everyone doing well'. The learners who are not from the same place they at least want to come near and feel the parent's warmth.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In relation to the zones of exclusion the study concludes that, most San children at this school fell into the category of silent exclusion, as they were enrolled but learned very little (Lewin, 2015), due to the cultural, language and teaching approaches barriers. The authors agree with Lewin (2015) that providing education does not only mean classroom facilities and/or teachers.Through this small study the authors have seen how creating opportunities for learning entails more than enrolling a child at a certain school.In analysing the data collected a complex dichotomy has emerged. There were strong tensions between the educational opportunities provided, the process and strategies employed and the culture of the San communities. What looked to be opportunities provided by the government lent itself into crisis when it came to meaningful learning for San children. It became clear that governments must ensure that when creating educational opportunities for all, these should not be mixed with challenges that promote discontinuity of learning among some children.

For successful provision of education that promotes optimum development of the San child, it means that all structures and strategies required to make education a success must be provided.Through the recommendations below, the authors are adding their voices to pronouncements made by other researchers, with the hope ofimprovingthe implementation of the San Development programme:

- Appropriate mechanisms and structures based on the many best practices available elsewhere in the world should be incorporated in any strategy designed to improve opportunities for access and retention of San learners, enabling them to complete primary and secondary education. Age, language and their indigenous knowledge should be taken into account when designing curricula and admitting San learners into formal schooling.
- To ensure that children are provided with quality education and benefit from educational opportunities, they must be provided with the resources required and taught through flexible and cultural sensitive pedagogical approaches. It is through teachers' ability to teach diverse groups of learners and employ inclusive pedagogical approaches that quality education is demonstrated.
- International organisations must continue to assist countries to develop responsive policies (paying attention to flexible ways of learning, language, culture) and create

enabling learning environments for children from marginalised/minority communities and children under distressed circumstances.

- The Government of the Republic of Namibia shouldcontinue to improve the implementation of the language policy, medium of instruction, classroom space and teacher-learner ratio. For successful mainstreaming the government mustintroduce a San language in Grades 1-3. Also, for developing sustainable learning environments that would motivate learning, San learners in the early Grades must always be taught by teachers who understand and are accepting of the San culture.
- For all mainstreaming strategies for San and other marginalised children into formal schooling,a San parent or guardian should be recruited within the school or wherever that mainstreaming is taking place, either as hostel or institutional workers. That person would act as an anchor for learners in times of need.Such involvement of parents would also aid the success of any educational project, because having a parents from same communities as learners around the school would encourage and motivate children to stay at school and complete their education.

In conclusion it is vital that United Nations member states, signatory to theinternational conventions and declarations, put measures in place to address the educational needs of people who are at the margins of their societies. Hopson and Hays (2008) proposed that addressing the educational conundrum that San children are faced with requires a new perspective. It is the hope of the authors that the findings of this study had somehow made a small contribution towards this new perspective and enabled a deeper understanding of the underlying problems faced by San communities when it comes to accessing equitable quality education.

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